

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today wrote to the Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, Rep. Ike Skelton, urging him to investigate the recent report of hundreds of graves at Arlington National Cemetery being misidentified, shoddy record keeping and improper burials.

"The report of misconduct at Arlington National Cemetery is a disgrace, and certainly no way to honor our nation's heroes or their families," said Mitchell. "We need to figure out exactly what happened, and ensure this never, ever happens again."

The Army launched an investigation of Arlington National Cemetery after hearing reports of instances in which cremated remains were mistakenly left in a dirt landfill and an unidentified body was found in a grave thought to be empty.

Yesterday, the Army announced that investigators found "more than 100 unmarked graves, scores of grave sites with headstones that are not recorded on cemetery maps and at least four burial urns that had been unearthed and dumped in an area where excess grave dirt is kept". [

[*The Washington Post*](#)

, June 11, 2010]

"To say that this is outrageous would be an understatement," Mitchell wrote. "I urge your committee to investigate this matter thoroughly, and stand ready to assist in any way that I can."

Mitchell, as the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, has made veteran care a priority. In 2007, he called for an investigation and was first to introduce legislation in the wake of the reports of deplorable conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, significant portions of which are now law.

[Source: [Mitchell Release](#), March 27, 2007]

Below is the text of Mitchell's letter to Chairman Skelton.

June 12, 2010

The Hon. Ike Skelton

Chairman

House Committee on Armed Services

**2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am seriously concerned about yesterday's Army investigation that found more than 200 graves at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) were misidentified or subject to improper record keeping.

According to the *Washington Post*, investigators found, "more 100 unmarked graves, scores of grave sites with headstones that are not recorded on cemetery maps and at least four burial urns that had been unearthed and dumped in an area where excess grave dirt is kept." [See: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/10/AR2010061005638.html>]

According to NBC News, "In 2008, an Air Force master sergeant was buried on top of a staff sergeant already in the grave, but the error wasn't discovered until the widow of the first service member buried there complained to authorities that someone else's headstone had been placed on her husband's grave." [See: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/10/AR2010061005638.html>]

To say that this is outrageous would be an understatement. This is a disgrace and no way to honor our nation's heroes or their families.

The Army Inspector General specifically cited, "improper internment and trans-interment of remains; including non-compliance with applicable internal regulations and policies regarding approving authority, accountability, and notification of next of kin." [See: http://usarmy.vo.llnwd.net/e1/arlington/downloads/anc_roi.pdf]

However, I fear this initial Army report may only be the tip of the iceberg. According to the *Washington Post*

, the cemetery's records are so poor, many are still kept on cards. "Cemetery maps showed 117 graves that had no corresponding headstone or burial card. Ninety-four grave sites marked as unoccupied on maps had headstones and burial cards. And the Army said it's not sure if all such mistakes have been found." [See:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/10/AR2010061005638.html>

]

I urge your committee to investigate this matter thoroughly, and stand ready to assist in any way that I can.

Honoring the service of our fallen must always remain and clear and unmistakable priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell

Member of Congress

###